Negotiating Protest Spaces on the Maidan: a Gender Perspective

Olesya Khromeychuk

Abstract: *The paper discusses the gendered use of space during the 2013-14 Maidan protests in Ukraine. While women were certainly present at the Maidan, the space they occupied was often regimented by the male protesters. Many women adopted traditional feminine roles of cooks, cleaners and peaceful messengers and were often perceived by their fellow-protesters as well as the general public as helpers of the male protesters rather than revolutionaries in their own right. At the same time, many female protesters managed to go beyond the physical and ideological boundaries of the Maidan, both in the process of overtly challenging the patriarchal order and while obeying its rules. The paper assesses the various ways in which women occupied the protest space, how they interacted with the often hostile spaces outside of the Maidan, and how they contributed to the construction of the meaning of the Maidan as a place of revolution. The paper also assesses whether the active participation of women in the protest movements foreshadows their liberation.*

> I saw online that Hrushevs'kyi Street was burning and that the situation had reached its peak. The next day I told my mother that I was on my way to college. I packed some clothes, booked my flight on the way, popped in to the Labour Party office and told them that I wasn't sure how long I was leaving for, when I would be back or if I would be back at all, stopped by my college and told them that I might need a gap year, because I had to leave, and left. I left a very long letter for my mother saying "mummy, I love you very much, I am sorry I did this, I hope you forgive me one day, but I cannot stay here when my country is going through such events. I don't want my children or grandchildren to ask me one day where I was

[during the protests] and I would have to answer that I was very concerned [for my country], but I spent this time in London".[1]

Iryna Ovchar left her studies and her job as a volunteer for the Labour Party in London and went to Kyiv on 20 January 2014 as soon as the clashes on the Maidan intensified. The day after she arrived, the first protester, Serhii Nihoian, was killed. Soon after, what had been a peaceful protest since the start of the demonstrations at the end of November 2013 turned into a scene of violent clashes that claimed over a hundred lives and left hundreds of people injured. Much of the coverage of the most intense phase of the protests, which lasted until the end of February 2014, focused on images of burning barricades, state-hired snipers, and exploding Molotov cocktails, all situated in a largely male-populated world of urban warfare. Ovchar, like hundreds of female protesters, was actively involved in this phase of the events, but as is the case with other women, her story is hard to tell because it does not fit in the generally accepted portrayal of the male-dominated protests where women featured only symbolically. Nevertheless, her story is a valid part of the history of the Maidan, and one of many similar stories, the exclusion of which creates a distorted depiction of the events, concealing some of their most remarkable dimensions. Not least among these was the fact that the Maidan became a space of the dynamic negotiation of gender roles, in which the latter were both reinforced and challenged.

This paper focuses on the participation of women in the 2013-14 protests in Ukraine, paying particular attention to the use of physical space on the Maidan and the construction of symbolic

---

[1] Interviewee Iryna Ovchar, 5 August 2015, London. At the time of the protests, Iryna Ovchar was completing a Political Science degree at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. In London, she was studying English and volunteering for the Labour Party. Ovchar performed a variety of duties on the Maidan including translating media articles and interpreting for Western journalists. She was also a member of the 39th all-female unit of the self-defense structure of the Maidan (*Samooborona Maidanu*). All interviews used in this paper were conducted in Ukrainian and all translations are mine. I am grateful to all who contributed their critique to the earlier drafts of this paper, in particular, Julie Fedor and Uilleam Blacker, and the anonymous reviewers. I am also grateful to the interviewees whose testimonies were used in the paper.

place. The paper assesses how women and men were expected to function within the "small state" into which the Maidan was transformed, and how the chances of establishing connections outside of this space differed for male and female protesters. The paper examines the practice of what I call "enforced protection" and the variety of reactions to this practice, including the acceptance of traditional gender roles by many protesting women. The paper also attempts to assess the impact gender relations had on the protests as a whole and on the way gender is perceived and presented in post-Maidan Ukraine. The paper examines recently published analyses of the Maidan's gender politics and refers to literature that discusses gender in protest movements elsewhere in the world. The main bulk of data consists of female protesters' testimonies, which I gathered in Kyiv in April 2014, soon after the protests ended, and in London in August 2015.[2]

[2] Some of this data has already been analyzed in my text "Gender and Nationalism on the Maidan" in David R. Marples and Frederick V. Mills (eds.), *Ukraine's Euromaidan. Analyses of a Civil Revolution* (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2015), 123-46. A number of texts focusing on gender dynamics of the Maidan have appeared since the protests, and informed this paper's conclusions, see Sarah D. Phillips, "The Women's Squad in Ukraine's Protests: Feminism, Nationalism and Militarism on the Maidan," *American Ethnologist* 41, no. 3 (2014): 414-26 (415), Olga Onuch and Tamara Martsenyuk, "Mothers and Daughters of the Maidan: Gender, Repertoires of Violence, and the Division of Labour in Ukrainian Protests," *Social, Health, and Communication Studies Journal. Contemporary Ukraine: A case of Euromaidan* 1, no. 1 (2014): 105-26 (106), as well as articles published during the actual protests, in particular, Anastasiia Mel'nychenko, "Navishcho Ukraini Zhinocha Sotnia?". *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, 24 March 2014, http://ua.boell.org/uk/2014/03/25/navishcho-ukrayini-zhinocha-sotnya (accessed 6 October 2015), Tetiana Bureychak and Olena Petrenko, "Kanapky, Sich ta 'banderivky'," *Zakhid.net*, 8 January 2014, http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?kanapki_sich_ta_banderivki&objectId=1300428 (accessed 18 January 2016).

"Europe starts with you"[3]

The events that have come to be known as the Maidan were a wave of protests, demonstrations and civil unrest that began on the night of 21 November 2013 following the then-President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych's failure to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. At first the protesters, mostly students, took to the streets to demand the signing of the Agreement and establishing closer ties with the EU. The main slogan at this point was "Ukraine is Europe". This, however, changed after the violent quashing of the protest by the riot police on the night of 30 November 2013. The brutal dispersal of the protesters gave rise to unprecedented waves of demonstrations at first in Kyiv and then all over the country demanding the resignation of Yanukovych and his government. This came to be known in Ukraine as the Revolution of Dignity. "It was not a question about Europe," explained Ovchar. "[We protested] because the children were hurt: people who were supposed to defend my country hurt the children of this country."[4] For almost two months the protests stayed peaceful. Around 800,000 Ukrainians took to the streets in Kyiv and other cities by December.[5] At this time the participation of women and men on the Maidan was nearly equal. Later, as the demonstrations acquired a more violent character, they became much more male-dominated.[6]

Even when the demands of the demonstrators shifted from the Association Agreement with the EU to more pressing domestic problems, the focus of the Maidan continued to be a fight for

---

3 *Yevropa pochynaiet'sia z tebe*, one of the slogans of the Maidan. An image of a protester holding this slogan can be viewed here: http://euromaydan.in/2013/11/23/європа-починається-з-тебе-євромайдан/ (accessed 5 October 2015).

4 Interviewee Ovchar.

5 Olga Onuch, "The Maidan and Beyond: Who Were the Protesters?" *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 44-51 (44).

6 Onuch and Martsenyuk, "Mothers and Daughters of the Maidan": 106. See also "Maidan-2013: khto stoit', chomu i za shcho?" a survey conducted by the *Fond "Demotratychni Initsiatyvy imeni Il'ka Kucheriva"* on 7-8 December 2013 in Kyiv on the Maidan, www.dif.org.ua/ua/polls/2013-year/mogjorjghoeoj.htm (accessed 6 October 2015).

respect for human rights and dignity. Protection of human rights, however, was understood differently by different protesters. In her assessment of the LGBT participants of the Maidan, Tamara Martsenyuk quotes one of her interviewees who concluded that "the 'Revolution of Dignity' was not the time to wave the rainbow flags on the barricades."[7] Even in the early days of the protests, slogans calling for equality for the LGBT community, or feminist mottoes such as "Europe = Equal Wages for Women" did not gain the acceptance of some protesters, in particular of nationalistically inclined men.[8] "I stood with a slogan that said 'Liberty Equality Sisterhood'," explained Ruslana Panukhnyk, a human rights activist.[9] "We stood for about five minutes when some people approached us and said: 'you are provocateurs! What are you doing?' and started to pull these [placards from us], and break them."[10]

Here the comparison with the protests in Egypt is highly relevant. In her assessment of the role of women in the Arab Spring, Nadje Al-Ali notes that

> Egyptian women who participated in demonstrations during International Women's Day on 8 March 2011 were harassed and accused of taking away attention from main issues. Some men who attacked the female protesters claimed that they were seeking to destroy Egypt and undermine family values and the sanctity of the family by telling women to desert their husbands.[11]

In Ukraine, women who joined the protests were usually marginalized, but not expelled from the protest space, yet as soon as their agenda included slogans referring specifically to women's rights or gender equality they were accused of distorting the demands of the protests and threatened with exclusion. Most

---

7 See Tamara Martsenyuk's article in this issue.

8 Ibid.

9 Interviewee Ruslana Panukhnyk, "No Borders" project worker at the Social Action Centre and an activist of the Ol'ha Kobylians'ka all-female unit, 8 April 2014, Kyiv.

10 Interviewee Panukhnyk.

11 Nadje Al-Ali, "Gendering the Arab Spring," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 5 (2012): 26–31 (29).

feminists either chose or were forced by the circumstances to fold away their banners calling for gender equality. The majority of women had no option but to remain silent or silenced on the Maidan. As Sarah Phillips argues in her study of the female protesters in Ukraine, "women were carrying out 'traditional roles' and tasks that were expected of them as women (not necessarily as full-fledged citizens)".[12] At first glance, then, it might seem that the Maidan was a space where the only protesters who enjoyed full rights were heteronormative males, and the rights of others were restricted. While this claim can be supported by plentiful evidence, the reality was much more nuanced. The very presence of women among the protesters and the variety of their actual involvement points to the fact that the protest space allowed for loopholes with a potential to alter the established order. The paper aims to assess whether this potential has been realized and to what extent the change it brought is likely to last.

"Sandwich Ideology"

Al-Ali argues that "women and gender are key to both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary processes and developments and not marginal to them".[13] She highlights the cases where individual women made significant contributions to the protests:

> in Egypt, Asma Mahfouz became known by many as the "leader of the revolution" after posting an online video calling young people to demonstrate en masse, helping to spark the protests that forced President Hosni Mubarak's resignation. In Bahrain, political activist Munira Fakhro played a leading role as an organizer and spokesperson for the Pearl Square demonstrations, demanding government reform and building a movement that was "not Sunni, not Shia, but Bahraini". In Yemen, human rights activist and journalist Tawakul Karman has protested nonviolently outside

12 Phillips, "Women's Squad": 415.

13 Al-Ali, "Gendering the Arab Spring": 26.

Sanaa University every Tuesday since May 2007, demanding that President Ali Abdullah Saleh step down from power.[14]

Al-Ali also stresses that these were not isolated cases and that "women participated side by side with men in the protests across the region."[15] This was also true in the Ukrainian case: women performed a great variety of roles, both those that can be seen as traditionally feminine and those that do not fit such a description. Anna Dovgopol, Gender Democracy Program Coordinator at the Kyiv branch of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, outlined some of the ways in which women contributed to the Maidan: "the leaders of the Euromaidan SOS[16] were women, most of whom were human rights activists. Most coordinators of the 'Hospital Guard' [*Varta v likarni*] were also women. [...] Female activists kept guard in hospitals to ensure that people who had been wounded on the Maidan were not taken away by the police".[17]

In her overview of the participation of women in the protests gender equality activist and journalist, Anastasiia Mel'nychenko, lists some other tasks often performed by women on the Maidan: receiving and sorting donated clothes, food, and medication, delivering the food and medical supplies to the barricades, working in medical stations, participating in the Automaidan,[18] running hotlines, coordinating the transportation of the wounded for treatment, working with the media, building and standing guard on the barricades, and preparing Molotov cocktails.[19] The variety of

---

14 Ibid., 27.

15 Ibid.

16 Euromaidan SOS is a group of lawyers, activists, and journalists who collect information about missing people and those who require legal help.

17 Interviewee Anna Dovgopol, Gender Democracy program coordinator at the Kyiv branch of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and an activist of the Ol'ha Kobylians'ka all-female unit, 7 April 2014, Kyiv.

18 Automaidan consisted of drivers who supported the Maidan protests by delivering supplies to the protesters, driving wounded protesters to hospitals, bringing protesters into central Kyiv from other parts of the city, blocking streets with their cars and performing other tasks.

19 See Mel'nychenko, "Navishcho Ukraini Zhinocha Sotnia?", paras. 2 and 5. See also seventeen testimonies of women who participated in the protests in a variety of roles, Iryna Vyrtosu (ed.), *Maidan. Zhinocha sprava* (Kyiv:

tasks that women performed on the Maidan corresponded to the variety of women who joined the protests.[20] Engaging in these various tasks, however, was not always easy. Mel'nychenko explains that "[w]omen who could not stand aside during the historic events had to literally fight for their right to be on the Maidan".[21]

As in the case of the Arab spring, in Ukraine women largely remained in the shadow of the male protesters, and were encouraged to take part in the Maidan in traditionally feminine auxiliary roles as carers and cooks.[22] Maria Berlins'ka, a graduate student on the Jewish Studies program at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, who took an active part in the protests in a number of capacities, including direct involvement in the most heated violent episodes, argued that there were only three main roles which women were permitted to play on the Maidan: cook and cleaner, "messenger of peace", and mother.[23] Berlins'ka argues that most Maidan inhabitants supported a "sandwich ideology", the idea that women's contribution would be most suited to the kitchen or other roles traditionally associated with women.[24]

The idea of a woman's primary function as that of the *berehynia*, a keeper of the home hearth and the protectress of the nation is very popular in Ukraine, and the gender roles propagated on the Maidan demonstrated this prevalent perception of women.[25] While men were sought by the self-defense structure of

---

Ukrains'kyi zhinochyi fond, 2014), http://www.uwf.kiev.ua/files/20140604104737967428maydan_web.pdf (accessed 18 January 2016).

20 See Mel'nychenko, "Navishcho Ukraini Zhinocha Sotnia?" para. 2.

21 Ibid.

22 See Mel'nychenko, "Navishcho Ukraini Zhinocha Sotnia?".

23 Darya Malyutina, "Gender, Nationalism and Citizenship in Anti-authoritarian Protests in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine," *UCL SSEES Research Blog,* 13 July 2015, para. 9, http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/2015/07/13/gender-nationalism-and-citizenship-in-anti-authoritarian-protests-in-belarus-russia-and-ukraine/ (accessed 25 September 2015).

24 See Malyutina, "Gender, Nationalism and Citizenship," para. 9.

25 See Oksana Kis', "Koho oberihaie Berehynia, abo Matriarkhat iak cholovichyi vynakhid," *Ya 4*, no. 16 (2006): 11-16, and Marian J. Rubchak, "Christian Virgin or Pagan Goddess: Feminism versus the Eternally Feminine in Ukraine" in

the Maidan (*Samooborona Maidanu*) "for the night watch on the barricades," women were told that they were "needed to keep watch by the mobilization tent, to keep order, to make tea and food for the guards and to spread information, leaflets and perform other mobilization work."[26] Those women who engaged in violent clashes or refused to limit their participation to the allocated duties of cooking and caring were often sensationalized in the pro-Maidan broadcast media as the exceptions that proved the rule.[27] The tasks performed by women were perceived and presented as vital, but nevertheless secondary. Yet the fact that there was one official all-female unit [*sotnia*] of the self-defense structure of the Maidan, and that women such as Berlins'ka were present at the barricades, suggests that the "sandwich ideology" could be undermined if not entirely overcome.[28]

A State within a State

The Maidan protests took place on and around Independence Square (*Maidan Nezalezhnosti*, better known simply as *Maidan*), Kyiv's main square, and included the whole length of Khreshchatyk Street, European Square (*Yevropeis'ka Ploshcha*) and some of the adjacent streets. Each of these spaces was associated with a certain type of activity during the protests. Hrushevs'kyi and Instytuts'ka streets saw the most violent clashes between the protesters and the state forces. The perimeter of the Maidan and some nearby streets were fortified with barricades that were several meters tall and reinforced with sacks full of frozen snow, tires, ropes, and barrels.

Rosalind Marsh (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 315-29 (319-25).

26 From an information poster seen on the Maidan in Kyiv in April 2014, private archive of the author.

27 See "Zhinochi oblychchia revoliutsii," *1+1 channel*, May 2014, http://www.1plus1.ua/video/zhinochi-oblichchya-revolyuciyi-na-1-1.html (accessed 24 October 2015).

28 Interviewee Maria Berlins'ka, a student of a Master's course in Jewish Studies and an activist of the Ol'ha Kobylians'ka all-female unit, 8 April 2014, Kyiv. See also an interview with Maria Berlins'ka in this issue. *Sotnia* is a designation of a military unit, equivalent to company.

Khreshchatyk Street housed numerous tents in which some of the protesters lived. The Maidan square itself was the heart of this "small state",[29] with a stage and various "institutional" tents, such as a makeshift chapel, hospital, press center, etc. In spite of its improvised structures, the Maidan was extremely efficient:

> Everything on Maidan is perfectly organized. It reminds of a small state with its own army, armory which consists of bottles, sticks and stones, food stock, mass media, shops and, of course, well-functioning border control. The approach lane is blocked with massive barricades. [...] There is everything for living on Maidan. One can get food, all the necessary clothes, defence and medical aid in case one gets wounded. Some people cam [sic] here two months ago and stayed.[30]

Doreen Massey makes a useful distinction between the notions of space and place:

> If *space* is conceptualized in terms of a four-dimensional "space-time" and [...] as taking the form not of some abstract dimensions but of the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations at all geographical scales [...then] a "place" is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location.[31]

The space as organized by the protesters could be viewed as an attempt to create a "bounded place", "a site of authenticity [...] singular and unproblematic in its identity".[32] Indeed, for all its diversity, the Maidan positioned itself as a space for likeminded people who shared an idea of and, to an extent, embodied a certain type of nation, based on the ideals of traditional Ukrainian society. Many protesters self-consciously adopted symbolism and language associated with the Cossack tradition, and the protest space itself

---

29 Ilya Varlamov, "Maidan Inside Out," *Ilya Varlamov's Live Journal*, 29 January 2014, para. 2, http://varlamov.ru/986689.html (accessed 24 September 2015).

30 Ibid., paras. 2-3.

31 Doreen Massey, *Place, Space and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 168. Emphasis as in original.

32 Massey, *Place, Space and Gender*, 5. Massey approaches this perception of place critically as it presupposes a view of "space as stasis". (Ibid.)

began to resemble the fortress of the Cossack *Sich*.[33] Just like the *Sich*, the Maidan was self-governed by a hierarchy consisting of its inhabitants, who opposed the authority outside of their "polity". Also like the *Sich*, the Maidan was fortified and administered by a militarized group. Unlike the women who were banned from *Sich*, the women of the Maidan were allowed to be physically present at the protest space, but they were not treated in the same capacities as men.[34] Discussing the role of women on the Maidan, Cossack Mykola, a member of the Cossack unit of the self-defense structure of the Maidan, highlights the contribution of women to the protests saying that not only do they work in the kitchen during the day, they also dance in the evening to keep the men from falling asleep. He then goes on to say that there are places at which women are not permitted, such as the Cossack council. This restriction of women's movement is explained as a sign of loyalty to Cossack traditions: "we are fulfilling our customs here".[35]

Thus, women rather took on a symbolic role in the protest space: the female body was synonymous with the motherland, Ukraine, violated by the enemies and in need of protection by the descendants of the noble Cossacks, the (male) revolutionaries.[36] Even though the males dominated in violent clashes, one of the most popular images representing this violence was an image of a female face covered in blood. The woman here served to represent not the female protesters, but the nation attacked and violated.[37]

---

33 *Sich* means a fortification and it refers to the space in which Cossacks lived in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries.

34 Cossacks could have wives and raise families in settlements outside of the Sich, but women were banned from the Sich itself. See Shane O'Rourke, *The Cossacks* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 160.

35 See "Zhinochi roli na maidani—kanapky proty barykad," 19 December 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_38OOVPufTo (accessed 21 January 2016).

36 Male protesters were often represented in the imagery used on the Maidan as modern Cossacks, and there was even one unit named *Kozats'ka sotnia* (Cossack unit) and another *Volyns'ka Sich* (Volhynian Sich). Women, on the other hand, were typically portrayed in the visual materials wearing civilian or folk clothes and a traditional wreath.

37 One of these posters, which also became one of the most popular profile pictures in the social media, can be viewed here: see Dmytro Desiateryk, *Den'*,

The Regulation of the Protest Space

Doreen Massey argues that: "the singularity of any individual place is formed in part out of the specificity of the interactions which occur at that location."[38] If the identity of a place is, as Massey argues, "always formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence there of particular set of interrelations, and by the effects which that juxtaposition and co-presence produce" [39] then the space immediately beyond the demonstrators' realm, which was occupied by the government forces and supporters and which served, in many ways, as the antithesis of the Maidan should also be considered as part of the protest place. The Maidan and what I will refer to as the counter-Maidan[40] were divided not only along ideological lines, but also by physical barriers: the protesters separated themselves with barricades, and the government forces fenced off the streets they occupied. The uniformed blue and black militiamen stood in sharp contrast to the vibrant mass of the protesters, dressed in improvised protective gear and multi-colored helmets. When the human anthill in the center of the capital often seemed haphazardly organized, the streets controlled by the pro-government forces were highly regimented.

Equally stark was the gender contrast: the Maidan itself was populated by both males and females, but the streets outside of the barricades were controlled exclusively by men. Most of these men were there because of their professional duty: some, especially those from the Interior Troops, were reluctantly obeying orders, while others, such as *Berkut*, the riot police, were keen to protect

---

11 December 2013, http://m.day.kiev.ua/uk/article/kultura/vikradeni-ievropoyu (accessed 6 October 2015).

38 Massey, *Place, Space and Gender*, 168. Emphasis as in original.

39 Ibid.

40 Anti-Maidan gatherings were organized in Kyiv and other cities in Ukraine. These were attended by both male and female protesters who supported Yanukovych's regime. These are included in my understanding of the counter-Maidan activity.

Yanukovych's government.[41] The space outside of the Maidan was also populated by hundreds of hired agents provocateurs: dressed in tracksuits and armed with improvised weapons, such as baseball bats, they were commonly known as *titushky*.[42] They were also male.

In her assessment of the gendered nature of colonial space, Sara Mills argues that "[s]pace is in general encoded and policed/regulated in different ways for women and men," adding that "generally it is the dominant group's view of space which is considered the norm."[43] While the Maidan and the counter-Maidan differed significantly, they were both dominated by men to a greater or lesser degree, which impacted the way these spaces were regulated. What is important to understand here is that the counter-Maidan contained males representing those in power, with the capacity to attack should the order be given, while the Maidan was inhabited by protesters in a much weaker position. However, while male revolutionaries were in a weaker position in relation to the militiamen, the female protesters were in a position of weakness in relation to both the state forces and their male counterparts. Thus, the state and its militia regulated the space by containing the protest in a restricted territory of the city, but the dominant group on the actual Maidan consisted of militarized men who confined women to certain "safe areas", such as the Maidan

---

41 *Berkut*, Ukraine's notorious riot police, were described by Russian commentator, Ilya Varlamov, as "the main fighting force" of the state, who "shoot at the crowd [and] genuinely hate people on the other side of the barricades". See Varlamov, "The Other Side of Maidan," para. 15.

42 "*Titushky*" was a term applied to men who were hired to aid the militia and who regularly attacked the protesters. The origin of the term comes from Vadym Titushko, a man who attacked Ukrainian 5 Kanal journalists in May 2013. See Kathleen Moore and Pavel Butorin, "From Maidan To Berkut: A Ukraine Protest Glossary," *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, 4 December 2013, para. 2, http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-protest-glossary-euromaydan/25190085.html (accessed 25 September 2015).

43 Sara Mills, "Gender and Colonial Space," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 3, no. 2 (1996): 125-48 (131). See also Henrietta L. Moore, *Space, Text and Gender: an anthropological study of the Marakwet of Kenya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1986), 74.

stage, the kitchens, hospitals and so on, and prevented them from going beyond the barricades or to the scenes of violent clashes.

The patriarchal culture dominant on the Maidan was accepted by most women inhabiting the space, as opposing it meant that their position as protesters could be undermined. It is important to understand, however, that "[t]he fact that women may end up supporting the dominant male order in their efforts to value themselves within it does not imply that women's interests are ultimately identical with those of men."[44] Henrietta Moore argues that "women recognize the conflict of interest between themselves and men, but are trying to identify themselves as valuable, social individuals."[45] This was certainly true for many women on the Maidan, who may not have fully agreed with the patriarchal division of labor in the protest space, but nevertheless went along with it in order not to jeopardize their access to at least those spaces that were made available to them by the dominant group. Moore also argues that "the continuing dominance of the male order and the appropriation of apparently male values or interests by women are the result of the powerful and reinforced homology between what is socially valuable and what is male".[46] This is exemplified by the popular slogans used on the Maidan: they referred to revolutionaries and heroes in the conventional masculine form and reinforced the assumption that women were merely the helpers of the revolutionaries.[47]

On the one hand, the Maidan was a bounded space, nostalgic for the "golden days" of Cossackdom, a space in which traditional identities and social relations were reinforced, yet, on the other hand, it was, to use Massey's term, "open and porous",[48]

---

44 Moore, *Space, Text and Gender,* 184-5.

45 Ibid. 185.

46 Ibid.

47 Here I am referring to slogans such as "Heroiam Slava!" (Glory to the Heroes!), and the wide-spread use of the word "revoliutsionery" (revolutionaries) in its grammatical masculine form. For the discussion of the nationalist connotations of the slogans used on the Maidan see Khromeychuk, "Gender and Nationalism on the Maidan".

48 Massey, *Place, Space and Gender*, 5.

i.e. reliant on interaction with rather than counterposition to other places.[49] Massey argues that

> The identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple. And the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counter-position to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections *to* that "beyond".[50]

Strikingly often, it was women who identified the "pores" of the Maidan that enabled them to pass back and forth across the boundaries, even despite attempts to confine them. Women were the ones who were often more successful in finding the connections to the "beyond", in particular, to the space guarded by the state-controlled militia. In addition, not all women were equally powerless: there were those who possessed a certain degree of authority over other women and, in some cases, over certain men, which was also played out through spatial relations.

The Safest Place in the Country

The Maidan is not unique as a place that has come to be synonymous with protests: Tahrir Square in Cairo, Tiananmen Square in Beijing, Bolotnaia Square in Moscow, Gezi Park in Istanbul, to name but a few, have all served as locations for protest movements and have since become powerful symbols of those protests. The presence of women in these public spaces is complex. Al-Ali observes that "in places like Tahrir Square in Cairo, where men and women mingled for weeks in extremely crowded and volatile situations, many Egyptian women reported that they had never felt as safe and been treated as respectfully as during the time of these protests."[51] On the other hand, Tahrir Square also became a space of humiliation and violence directed at women. In her *Women in Dark Times*, Jacqueline Rose offers a disturbing

---

49 Ibid., 121.
50 Ibid. Emphasis as in original.
51 Al-Ali, "Gendering the Arab Spring": 27.

description of the events: "In Tahrir Square in July 2013, protesting women, whose voices were so central to the revolutions in Egypt, were surrounded and assaulted by groups of armed thugs."[52] Patrick Kingsley reported from Cairo that when the forced departure of Mohamed Morsi was announced "the streets around Tahrir Square turned into an all-night carnival. But not everyone there was allowed to celebrate. Among the masses dancing, singing and honking horns, more than 80 women were subjected to mob sexual assaults, harassment or rape."[53]

In the Ukrainian case, during the demonstrations many women noted a sense of security on the Maidan. Iryna Ovchar said that when she noticed that some protesters around her were panicking in times of extreme danger and thought of abandoning the Maidan, she convinced them that at that point in time the Maidan was the safest place in the whole of Kyiv.[54] The overt danger came not from inside the Maidan, but from the riot police, *titushky* and the militia. There were numerous reports of protesters being kidnapped, tortured, and even murdered by the counter-Maidan groups. The majority of the known victims of these incidents were men.[55]

One of the reasons why the Maidan was seen as a safe place to the protesters might be rooted in the familiarity with the space they inhabited. Yi-Fu Tuan emphasizes the need to get to know a space in order for it to become a meaningful place:

> What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. [...] From the security and stability of place

---

52 Jacqueline Rose, *Women in Dark Times* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 260.

53 Patrick Kingsley, "80 Sexual Assaults in One Day—the Other Story of Tahrir Square," *The Guardian*, 5 July 2013, para. 1, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/05/egypt-women-rape-sexual-assault-tahrir-square (accessed 19 January 2016).

54 Interviewee Ovchar.

55 For one of the most widely reported cases of the kidnapping and humiliation of Mykhailo Havryliuk see "Toi, koho rozdiahnuv 'Berkut', vtik i kazhe, shcho ioho propuskaly 'kriz' strii'," *Radio Svoboda*, 24 January 2014, http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/25241495.html (accessed 20 January 2016).

> we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space and vice versa.[56]

The safety of the Maidan also lay in the fact that most of its inhabitants were there for the same cause: a change of regime. The shared cause encouraged a shared sense of unity among the protesters and, therefore, trust. Thus, the Maidan was only safe for those who fully supported its causes. The *Berkut* members were sometimes captured by the Maidan supporters. They were publicly led through the angry crowds on the Maidan, sometimes humiliated, and then interrogated by the *Samooborona*.[57] However, even when it came to the opponents of the Maidan, certain negotiations were possible. An extraordinary story recounted by Ovchar can help demonstrate such a negotiation.

"Do you know where the lover's bridge is?" asked Ovchar, beginning her story.[58] "So we get there with a friend of mine, unprotected, without helmets at around 2 am."[59] Her tale would be unremarkable were it not for the fact that the "lover's bridge" is located in Mariins'kyi Park, which during the protests served as a place where the so-called *titushky* operated, attacking people connected with the Maidan.[60] When asked whether she felt fear going to this notorious park, Ovchar replied: "I am a girl. I was hoping that I would not get beaten up. I believe that you can find common language with every person."[61] Indeed, women were

---

56 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 6.

57 See "Zakhopyly berkutivtsiv i zakhyshchaiut' ikh vid ubyvstva natovpom," *Texty.org.ua*, 18 February 2014, http://texty.org.ua/pg/news/textynewseditor/read/51787/Zahopyly_berkutivciv_i_zahyshhajut_jih_vid_ubyvstva (accessed 3 March 2016). "Demonstranty pid chas nastupu na Maidan zakhopyly kil'kokh biitsiv 'Berkutu'," *TSN*, 20 February 2014, http://tsn.ua/politika/demonstranti-pid-chas-nastupu-na-maydani-zahopili-kilkoh-biyciv-berkutu-335487.html (accessed 3 March 2016).

58 Interviewee Ovchar.

59 Ibid.

60 See "U Mariins'komu parku 'titushky' pobyly zhurnalistiv," *5.ua,* 29 November 2013, http://www.5.ua/suspilstvo/u-mariinskomu-parku-titushky-pobyly-zhurnalistiv-onovleno-video-42818.html (accessed 5 October 2015).

61 Interviewee Ovchar.

sometimes able to enter certain spaces, such as Mariins'kyi Park, with greater ease and less serious consequences than men. Traditionally, female companions have been used to play a civilianizing role when accompanying military men.[62] The friend who accompanied Ovchar was male and it is doubtful that he would have been able to pass through Mariins'kyi Park unharmed had he not been accompanied by a woman. By entering the space of potential danger, Ovchar took the risk from which women protesters were discouraged, but did so to serve one of the traditional feminine roles, most propagated on the Maidan: she was acting as a messenger of peace.[63] Ovchar continued her story:

> We see typically dressed *titushky*. One of them had a head injury and was bleeding a lot. *Titushka* or not, he's a human being. We approached them and asked them if we could help, and the boys started to tell us their story: they were from Donets'k, they got paid 200 hryvnias per day, but they had been betrayed [by those who hired them]: *Samooborona* had attacked a bus with *titushky* and beaten them up. Their passports were taken away, but now *Berkut* and the Interior Troops, for some reason, were not letting them pass towards the Parliament to get to their tents. The only way for them to get there was via the Maidan. [64]

The development of the story could not seem less likely: Ovchar and her friend offered to take the injured men into safety through the Maidan. As Ovchar explained,

> One of them told us that he had a small child and no job. He was offered to go to Kyiv for three days and earn some money, so he couldn't refuse such an offer. They seemed like normal guys, they were trying to speak

---

62 In the Ukrainian nationalist resistance of the 1930s-50s, for instance, female insurgents were often sent on missions together with men in order to reinforce the civilian image of the man, essential for their underground work. See "Diial'nist' OUN ta UPA na terytorii tsentral'no-skhidnoii ta pivdennoi Ukrainy," *Litopys UPA*, vol. 18 (Kyiv-Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2011), 1042.

63 As was mentioned earlier in the paper, "messengers of peace" was one of the three most popular roles which women were permitted to play on the Maidan. The other two were the role of a mother and a cleaner and cook. See Berlins'ka in Malyutina, "Gender, Nationalism and Citizenship," para. 9.

64 Interviewee Ovchar.

> Ukrainian to us. We had no choice but to lead them to safety via the Maidan.[65]

What followed next was the opportunity for the men to experience the hospitality of the place which they had been hired to attack. Evidently, this was only possible because they were escorted by insiders, and because the true identity of the men from Donets'k was not revealed to the people of the Maidan:

> You should have seen their eyes! They were approached at least five times by people offering them tea and sandwiches. They could not believe it. [...] They asked us to take a photo by the Christmas tree. I pointed out that it was inappropriate, but one of them said: "I have a son who is four years old. He really wanted to come to Kyiv to see the Christmas tree, but I couldn't bring him here because of all of this".[66]

After this spontaneous tour of the Maidan, the two men were delivered to the Parliament building where they were reproached by their superiors for having accepted the help of the protesters.

It was Ovchar's gender and the traditional expectations that it implied that made the passage through the "enemy zone" possible and safe both for her male colleague when walking through Mariins'kyi Park and for the so-called *titushky* when entering the Maidan. Thus, the female protesters who accepted the roles of peacemakers and communicators contributed to the overall atmosphere of safety on the Maidan no less than the males who guarded the barricades and who took most credit for the protection of the protest space. This contribution, however, often relied on the traditional perceptions of gender roles where women are seen as less threatening.

---

65 Ibid.

66 Interviewee Ovchar. The Christmas tree became one of the symbols of the revolution. Abandoned before being fully assembled by the authorities, it was "decorated" by the protesters with placards proclaiming the revolutionary demands. Interestingly, one of the largest images visible on the tree was a female face: the woman depicted was Yulia Tymoshenko, still imprisoned at the time of the protests.

Enforced Protection

Analyzing control practices in the urban environment, Elizabeth Wilson states that the protection and control of women go hand in hand.[67] In this case, the creation of the perceived safe environment on the Maidan was in part a result of patriarchal striving to "protect" females, which further restricted the roles women could play in the protests. As soon as the protests turned violent there was much effort to clear the Maidan of "women and children". Furthermore, if a woman insisted on her right to remain on the square, she was accused of putting in danger the men, who, as they claimed, would have to protect her. Mariia Berlins'ka explained that for the whole phase of the clashes on Hrushevs'kyi Street she was at the frontline and no one paid particular attention to her gender. At quieter times, however, the fact that she was a woman became a reason for restricting her movement: "you'll be walking during the day, the situation is peaceful, and suddenly you hear: 'you can't go there, because you're a woman'."[68]

Ruslana Panukhnyk also spoke of being prevented from entering Hrushevs'kyi Street during the most heated days of the protests: "personally, I got stopped by a woman, who stood on the barricade and said: 'no-no, we let only men through; women and children cannot pass'. While sixteen or seventeen-year-old boys had no problems going through."[69] Thus *Samooborona* appointed a woman whose job was to stop women and children (but not sixteen-year-old men!) from crossing the barricades "for their own sake".[70] As a matter of fact, Panukhnyk had no intention of participating in the violence that unfolded on Hrushevs'kyi Street. The problem for her was not being prevented from participating in the clashes, but being deprived of the right to make that choice independently:

---

67 Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 16.

68 Interviewee Berlins'la.

69 Interviewee Panukhnyk.

70 Ibid.

> I stand by pacifist views, and probably would not have thrown Molotov [cocktails], but it was important for me to go there and see how I could help there, and evaluate the situation with my own eyes, and not just based on what I had been told. I spent most of the protests on the Maidan, and I believed I had the right to go there [...] but I was denied such a chance. [71]

Panukhnyk explains these actions as "a deliberate attempt to prevent part of the Maidan [the female protesters] from entering part of the Maidan [the space beyond the barricades]".[72]

Ovchar tells a similar story of experiencing enforced protection. When she arrived on Hrushevs'kyi Street, together with another woman, Yulia, they decided to try talking to *Berkut* and the Interior Troops in order to offer their explanation of who the protesters were and why people took to the streets, realizing that they had only received a one-sided, anti-Maidan portrayal of the protests. Being female, in their view, was crucial for the success of their mission:

> We understood that if men went to talk to them they could be shot at and stun grenades could be thrown at them, but Yulia and I took our hats off, although it was freezing, so they could see our hair and understand that we were girls. [...] I had a friend in the L'viv division of *Berkut*. I imagined that someone like my friend could not attack me.[73]

Young women believed that the militiamen were more likely to listen to them than to their male colleagues. Here also, the women adopted the roles of messengers of peace. Paradoxically, their mission was complicated by the fact that they were not listened to by their own men from the *Samooborona*: "some of the men did not want to let us through, saying 'you are girls, get away from here'".[74] Eventually, Ovchar confronted one of the "protectors": "just as you love your country and are prepared to die for it, I am too! There is no difference between us here. [...] If they shoot at you and injure you, they can shoot at me the same way. Neither of

---

71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Interviewee Ovchar.
74 Ibid.

us has the power to do anything about it, we are in the same position."[75]

Although men and women were, indeed, equally vulnerable with regard to the potential violence that could be perpetrated by the militia, the women were in a better position to make a connection with the "beyond", i.e. to attempt communicating with the counter-Maidan forces in a non-violent way. However, before Ovchar could try negotiating with the state forces, she had to defeat the male protesters. Thus, on the one hand, the women were accepting their roles as peaceful protesters, thereby supporting the practices of the patriarchal order. On the other hand, in order to perform the task of "messengers of peace", which men were less likely to succeed in without provoking violence, they had to resist the enforced protection adopted by the patriarchy of the Maidan. Eventually, Ovchar and her friend managed to literally find a "pore" in the barricades by identifying a less well-guarded spot and climbing over it. Ovchar and her friend addressed *Berkut* and the Interior Troops, but they drowned the women's plea with the rattling of their shields.[76] The women thus remained unheard by their fellow-protesters and by the opposition.

Ovchar and her friend were not the only ones hoping to use gender stereotypes effectively and inspire the traditional attitude towards women as peaceful messengers who should not be hurt by the militiamen. Kateryna Chepura, an activist of the *Vidsich* organization and a professional theater director, was against the violence and maintained that the best method of resistance was peaceful protest. As the leader of an all-female platoon of the 16th unit of the *Samooborona*, Chepura believed that women were strategically crucial for peaceful resistance. In her view, the unarmed women of the 16th unit should march in the first echelons in front of the *Samooborona* troops, "as that would soften the

---

75 Ibid.

76 This scene can be watched in one of the episodes of *Babylon '13*, a film project by a number of Ukrainian documentary filmmakers who set out to capture the events of the Maidan. See "Quiet," *Babylon '13,* Kyiv, 22 January 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXV2-coBQIA&index=38&list=PL4R7G-LBUsSsnat4YB7WuLptGYsZYVrZ6 (accessed 21 September 2015).

behavior of the opponent".[77] For both Chepura and Ovchar the plan, based on a traditional perception of gender, seemed potentially effective, even if women were to be hurt: "if they had attacked an all-female unit or just one of the girls, not just one hundred thousand people would have come out to the Maidan the next day, but the whole of Kyiv and the whole of Ukraine," argued Ovchar.[78] Chepura supported the same view, stating that her platoon realized the potentially fatal danger of their activity, but they insisted that "such a sacrifice would not be wasted, because the society would see that peaceful, unarmed people were killed".[79]

Thus, some women were prepared to resist the enforced protection and to take serious risks not only because they opposed the gendered division of roles on the Maidan and wished to participate on a par with men, but precisely because they understood the power of gendered perception of violent conflicts, and recognized the potential effectiveness of the role of a harmed innocent female victim in mobilizing an even larger protest. This exemplifies the often paradoxical and complex ways in which gender issues played out on the Maidan.

Performing Femininity

Although the voices of women on the Maidan were not completely silenced, they were only heard in certain circumscribed contexts and roles, usually as those of mothers or wives.[80] Moore argues that suppression of alternative viewpoints is "achieved by making the cultural constructions of gender and the relations between the sexes appear inevitable and natural."[81] Many women protesters viewed the traditional feminine roles available to them on the Maidan as natural and inevitable. This would suggest that women

---

77 Interviewee Kateryna Chepura, an activist of the *Vidsich* organization and a theater director, 10 April 2014, Kyiv.

78 Interviewee Ovchar.

79 Interviewee Chepura.

80 See Onuch and Martsenyuk, "Mothers and Daughters of the Maidan".

81 Moore, *Space, Text and Gender*, 170.

themselves participated in their own suppression. Nevertheless, the degree of the women's agency can and should be debated.

Assuming a maternal role, female protesters adopted a certain degree of power within the masculinist setting. This approach is not unique to the Ukrainian case. Assessing participation of women in protest movements in Northern Ireland, Fidelma Ashe states that by "drawing on their maternal or familial roles" women "legitimate their political action."[82] Ashe argues that this strategy enables women "to gain an effective public voice in a male-dominated political arena," and while such strategies might "reinforce traditional gendered identities, they are also disruptive of nationalism's public/private divide because they challenge the separation of private/domestic life from public politics."[83] Tamara Martsenyuk and Olga Onuch offer persuasive evidence to support Ashe's claim that a protesting mother is an effective role for a woman to assume in a male-dominated space, even if she is not a mother. "Some female activists joke[d] that they took it upon themselves to 'mother' male activists, making sure 'they had enough to eat' and they 'had warm clothes and tea'."[84] Actual motherhood, however, became a hindrance to some women:

> this was a typical problem among female activists who were the partners of male activists. These female activists complained, or explained, that they had to stay at home with children, because they could not convince their engaged partners to do so. One woman even reiterated that she "wanted to go throw some Molotov cocktails…" but she could not "while holding a baby".[85]

Thus, some women with children were deprived of the opportunity to participate in the protests precisely *because* their motherhood was not compatible with the protest space, especially with the introduction of the enforced protection of "women and children", while others, whether "real" mothers or not, were encouraged to

---

82 Fidelma Ashe, "The McCartney Sisters' Search for Justice: Gender and Political Protest in Northern Ireland," *Politics* 26, no. 3, (2006): 161-7 (162).

83 Ibid.: 163.

84 Onuch and Martsenyuk, "Mothers and Daughters of the Maidan": 116.

85 Ibid.

assume motherly roles in order to legitimize their participation in the demonstrations.

As well as the role of mother, another role that was available to women in this context was that of the female admirer of a soldier who validates him and constitutes him as a "real man". Assuming this role, some women started initiatives such as the distribution of Valentine's cards to the protesting men. On 14 February 2014, volunteer women carried around the Maidan a box marked "letters for the [male] heroes from Ukrainian women," containing love letters, which were presented to male protesters.[86] Another group of volunteers decided not to stop at the dispatching of love notes. These women added a number to Valentine's cards and organized a raffle on St Valentine's Day, announcing that "[t]he winner will receive a prize: a romantic dinner with his loved one in a restaurant. If he does not have an other half, the girls who gifted the love notes will compete for the opportunity to dine with the lucky man."[87] Some women, thus, not just offered prizes to the men, but were even prepared to serve as a "prize" themselves.

Even though these women were acting within the protest space and might have considered themselves as protesters, their tasks had little to do with the objectives of the Maidan; they were there merely to entertain and flatter the male protesters. Another group of women handed out notes in the style of "Love is…" chewing gum, paraphrased to "Maidan is…" One such note featured a man and a woman with a barricade and Ukrainian and EU flags in the background: the woman was dressed in a skirt, wearing a traditional wreath and holding a tray with tea; the man was depicted in militarized attire and a helmet, holding a shield and a baseball bat. Another note featured a civilian-looking women

---

86 The word "heroes" in Ukrainian in general and on the Maidan in particular was mostly used in its masculine grammatical form. See "Evoliutsiia hidnosti. Khronika 14 liutoho 2015," *24 Kanal*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=er5TNbe6EJo #t=112 (accessed 1 October 2015).

87 See "Den' zakokhanykh na Yevromaidani," *Maidan*, 14 February 2014, para. 3, http://maidan.org.ua/2014/02/den-zakohanyh-na-evromajdani/ (accessed 5 October 2015).

addressing a military man, resembling a member of the Interior Troops or *Berkut*: "leave your silly grenades, turn your shield into scrap metal and surrender to love".[88] The depictions on the Valentine's cards showed the way in which real women were expected to behave in the masculinist space of the Maidan.

The concept of the Maidan spread widely outside of the immediate protest space in Kyiv and lent its name to protests all over Ukraine, with regional centers creating their mini-'Maidans' and even the diaspora communities organizing 'Maidans' internationally.[89] Gender relations in these smaller Maidans were no different from their central equivalent. In L'viv, for instance, a group of volunteers *Svoi* [Our own] organized a flash mob on 14 February 2014 calling the girls of L'viv to meet in one of the central squares of the city to form with their bodies a heart-shaped formation while holding blue and yellow paper hearts in their hands, and in this way "pass on messages of love to those who are standing on the Maidans of Ukraine."[90] The women with blue and yellow paper hearts explained the rationale behind their flash mob in the following way:

> We have come today to demonstrate our love and support to the boys from the *Samooborona*. The boys, who are not afraid of the cold, who are not afraid of *titushky*, who are ready to self-organize, who are prepared to defend their native city, to defend their country, to defend their girls and the girls who are not theirs.[91]

---

88 See "Na Maidani rozdaiut' osoblyvi valentynky," *Online Ukraina*, 14 February 2014, http://ukr-online.com/society/1829-na-maydan-rozdayut-osobliv-valentinki-foto-vdeo.html (accessed 2 October 2015).

89 See Darya Malyutina's article in this issue.

90 Blue and yellow are the colours of the Ukrainian national flag. See Euromaidan L'viv Facebook page post, 13 February 2014, https://www.facebook.com/euromaidanlviv (accessed 1 October 2015) and "Zavtra o 13.00 u L'vovi – fleshmob 'Z l'ubov"u v sertsi'," *DailyLviv*, 13 February 2014, http://dailylviv.com/news/kultura/zavtra-o-1300-u-lvovi-fleshmob-z-lyubovyu-v-sertsi-4646 (accessed 1 October 2015).

91 "L'viv"ianky stvoryly zhyve zhovto-blakytne sertse dlia Samooborony Maidanu," *Vholos*, 14 February 2014, http://vgolos.com.ua/photo/divchata_podaruvaly_hloptsyam_z_samooborony_svoi_zhovtoblakytni_sertsya_134602.html, (1 October 2015).

The protests in L'viv were thus presumed by these women as a safe space, as "home". Crucially, however, this home could only be safe for as long as the men were out there defending their city, their country, and their women.

The irony is in the fact that many women were on the Maidans all over the country, protesting on a par with the men in the cold, and that most men, just like women, were indeed afraid. In fact, Ovchar suggests that there were women who were less fearful than men:

> I saw lots of women on the Maidan. And I saw women who, like me, did not feel fear and who, even when the stun grenades were exploding around them, were running away less than men. There were some men who simply vanished during clashes and there were some women who approached this situation seriously, and realized that there was little difference between an unarmed man and an unarmed woman.[92]

Maria Berlins'ka also spoke of fear: "I felt animal fear when I saw their faces: the face of that *berkutivets* [riot police officer] who was running directly towards you, and you realized that he was going to beat you to a pulp."[93] She stated that at the time of the protests, "people fell into two categories: those who were afraid and did not go to the Maidan, and those who were afraid and went. Everyone was afraid."[94] Male and female experiences of the protests did not fundamentally differ in that all were exposed to the potentially fatal danger of being shot by snipers, or hurt by the riot police, and all were experiencing the cold and discomfort of protesting in the middle of winter. What differed was the perception of the contribution that women and men made to the protests: while the men were hailed as heroes (or, indeed, shamed for not being heroic enough and staying at home), the women were thanked for fulfilling the "feminine" roles of carers and cooks, but told to stay away from the "male" realm of the barricades and actual or potential violence.

---

92 Interviewee Ovchar.
93 Interviewee Berlins'ka.
94 Ibid.

Space for Negotiations

"When the famous Egyptian feminist Nawal Al Saadawi went to Tahrir Square in an effort to raise awareness about the necessity of having a parallel fight for women's rights in Egypt, that move was not welcomed by many in the square, who considered it either inappropriate or at least badly timed," explains Sahar Khamis, analyzing the participation of women in the Arab Spring.[95] Khamis quotes a journalist, Samia Sade, who recalls the International Women's Day march in Tahrir Square in 2011:

> This march, which was supposed to attract a million women to rally for women's rights, only managed to get five hundred women out to the square. They were shouted at by some men who told them to "go back to the kitchen".[96]

As we have seen, the situation was no different on the Maidan when the rights of women were raised. After experiencing numerous instances of discrimination during the protests, Maria Berlins'ka decided that the question of gender equality needed to be raised from the inner sanctum of the Maidan, the stage. She had to wait until nighttime to deliver her speech on the rights of women and faced numerous obstacles before the organizers permitted her to voice her thoughts publicly.[97] She was confronted by a group of men attempting to persuade her that such questions were untimely and that raising them might encourage women to take unnecessary risks. One of the men simply told her that she should concentrate on "what she does best": making borscht, sewing, etc.[98] Even when Berlins'ka was being introduced by the man in charge of the stage, he ensured that her speech was preceded by his own introduction:

> Statistically, there are fewer men than women in Ukraine, but, naturally, the task of every real man is to protect those who are weaker, in particular

---

95 Sahar Khamis, "The Arab 'Feminist' Spring?" *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 3 (2011): 692-5 (693).

96 Ibid.: 693-4.

97 See Khromeychuk, "Gender and Nationalism on the Maidan", 131-2.

98 Interviewee Berlins'ka.

> women, children and our elderly parents. Maria Berlins'ka, who will speak from this stage in a moment, is of a different opinion.[99]

Although Berlins'ka did succeed in getting access to the key space—the stage—and managed to deliver her speech, those who controlled the space succeeded in reducing the impact of Berlins'ka's message, by creating obstacles for her and delaying her speech. Her access to one of the crucial spaces of the Maidan was thus not denied *per se*, but it was deliberately controlled and limited by the men in charge.

Women had to be inventive in finding ways to negotiate the space that they occupied. Different women resorted to different techniques. Iryna Ovchar explains how she won her right to move relatively freely around the Maidan:

> I had a press badge, a *Samooborona* badge, and a spilno.tv one, and I knew which badge worked at which barricades. Sometimes the *Samooborona* badge worked, sometimes the press badge, but you also had to shout at them for five minutes that you have the right to be there just like anyone else.[100]

She explained that her tenacity was fueled by the results she achieved: "I like to win arguments with men, persuade each one of them that I am the same as them. You notice how they change. It was tiresome but each time it was a small victory."[101]

Some women negotiated their place on the Maidan by entering the structures controlled by men. Anna Kovalenko, a theater critic by training and a radio journalist, formed the official 39th all-female unit of the *Samooborona*, and thus became the only female unit leader in the self-defense structure of the Maidan.[102] Kovalenko's story could be seen as indicative of the fluid structure

---

99 The speech and the introductory remarks are available here: "Pravo zhinky na Maidan," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9du79huJx0 (accessed 10 September 2015).

100 Interviewee Ovchar.

101 Ibid.

102 Interviewee Anna Kovalenko, radio journalist, theater critic and leader of 39th unit of *Samooborona*, 8 April 2014, Kyiv. For further discussion of the 39th unit of *Samooborona* see Khromeychuk, "Gender and Nationalism on the Maidan".

of the Maidan: in spite of the clear patriarchal rhetoric propagated there, *Samooborona* did not prevent the creation of the all-female unit, and appointed a woman as its leader. Yet, the fact that a special all-female unit had to be created to engage the women who wished to join *Samooborona* (rather than letting them join the existing units), is also evidence of gender segregation.

Before the formation of the 39th unit, another unit comprised of both men and women had to be divided according to gender. The aforementioned 16th unit of the *Samooborona* was created out of an existing organization, *Vidsich,* 50 percent of which consisted of women, and which supported gender equality within their organization. Once *Vidsich* joined the Maidan, however, they decided to deliberately create an all-female platoon and separate the male and the female members of the unit, on the assumption that this ghettoization would allow the women to exercise more freedom than if they had simply stayed in a mixed unit. The leader of the all-female platoon, Kateryna Chepura explained that the perception of the women from her unit by the rest of *Samooborona* changed once they created a separate sub-structure for women:

> When we said that we were formally registered as an all-female platoon, we were taken seriously [...], but when we said that we were simply [part of] the 16th unit, we were asked: "who accepted you into the unit? What the hell? Don't you have men there?" Given the fact that the 39th [all-female unit] did not exist at that stage, [Andrii] Parubii [the commandant of the *Samooborona*] promoted us on Facebook as an all-female platoon, because there was a point (unfortunately very late) when Parubii understood that the face of the Maidan was becoming very threatening, and he started to position us at the front of the [marching] column, to make the girls visible and show that *Samooborona* does not only consist of just [men in] balaclavas.[103]

Thus, although women were marginalized by the *Samooborona* and, in many cases, prevented from participation in the protests in the same capacity as men, their presence in the ranks of the self-defense structure of the Maidan was instrumentalized by the

---

[103] Interviewee Chepura.

commandant of the *Samooborona* in order to create a certain perception of the protesters when this seemed necessary.

Precisely because of its patriarchal nature, the Maidan became a space for many initiatives carried out by feminists (albeit often in a non-feminist guise) that brought issues of women's rights to the attention of parts of Ukrainian society, which otherwise might not have been reached. Anna Khvyl', one of the organizers of feminist initiatives on the Maidan, said that when her colleagues shouted slogans such as "down with Yanukovych, down with patriarchy," they were joined by a group of young men who gladly repeated the slogan and shouted it louder than the feminists.[104] While Khvyl' does not think it likely that these young men fully understood the slogan and went home to offer to wash the dishes or do the housework instead of their partners, sisters, or mothers, she does hope that such initiatives made at least a small number of people think about what patriarchy actually means.[105]

At the height of the protests, a number of feminist, leftist, LGBT and human rights activists decided to organize a group that would help women find ways of making a meaningful contribution to the protests, and thus formed another all-female unit, and named it after Ol'ha Kobylians'ka, a Ukrainian modernist feminist writer.[106] These women decided to abandon their overt feminist stance in order to be able to remain on the Maidan and continue their feminist work even if this required some dissimulation: "we do not position ourselves as feminists for strategic reasons, because feminism still scares away women and men in Ukraine," explained Anna Dovgopol who co-organized the unit.[107] While, in principle, any activity on the Maidan was open to all protesters, many women were often simply not aware of the variety of the available

---

104 An interview with Anna Khvyl', "Buty zrozumilymy, zalyshaiuchys' radykal'nymy," *Insha/Inaia,* no. 1 (2014): 7-8 (8).

105 Ibid.

106 For further discussion around the choice of the unit's name and why Ol'ha Kobylians'ka was chosen by the unit founders among other figures who were proposed for the same purpose, see Khromeychuk, "Gender and Nationalism on the Maidan", 127.

107 Interviewee Dovgopol.

tasks, and resorted to volunteering in the kitchen as that seemed to be the only job accessible to them. The Ol'ha Kobylians'ka unit addressed this issue by acting as the first point of contact for many women who came to the Maidan: "depending on women's wishes, we contacted the services and proposed volunteers to them," explained Ruslana Panukhnyk.[108]

Unlike, Kovalenko's 39th *sotnia*, the Ol'ha Kobylians'ka unit remained outside of the official *Samooborona*, but still referred to itself as a *sotnia*. Panukhnyk explained their adoption of this designation:

> We decided to form the [Ol'ha Kobylians'ka] all-female unit, and deconstruct the idea of the *sotnia*, without the hierarchical structure and militarism. We took this designation because it was trendy, and so that people understood that [our group] also related to the Maidan.[109]

Presenting themselves as a *sotnia* meant that as soon as the group became active, "there were women who would come and say 'where can I get a uniform and weapons? I want to go to the barricades', and there were many like that," explained Panukhnyk. [110] Most of the Ol'ha Kobylians'ka unit activists supported non-violent methods of protest, but the unit also included women who chose to participate in the violent clashes: "[we] maintained the standpoint that an adult woman can make her own choice," explained Dovgopol.[111]

Those women who did want to "take up arms" had the opportunity to join Kovalenko's 39th unit. However, in spite of its official incorporation into the *Samooborona*, this formation was also affected by gender expectations. Ovchar, who was a member of the unit explained:

> I wanted us to be a fully functioning *sotnia*, but we mostly worked with information. It was great when there were marches to the parliament and there was a column of women and they were visible, and the press paid

---

[108] Interviewee Panukhnyk.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Interviewee Dovgopol.

> attention to us. But our functions did not include everything that male units' functions included.[112]

Ovchar explained this by the fact that women who joined the 39th unit were not prepared to be a fully-fledged self-defense unit: "we had some trainers who came daily to teach us some elementary self-defense. But it was such a mess, you can't imagine. Imagine 150 girls who need to form a line. It was a nightmare. Totally disorganized."[113] When I enquired whether she thought that women were more disorganized than men, Ovchar clarified: "the boys were also disorganized. But you shout at them and they listen. And the girls, well, they are girls."[114] Thus, in spite of being part of the *Samooborona* and accepted by the hierarchy of the Maidan, the women of the 39th unit continued to be perceived, and perceived themselves, as "the girls", helpers of the "real" revolutionaries.

Gender performativity, i.e. performing "as a man" or "as a woman" was an important factor on the Maidan for both women and men. When it came to the protesters' active participation in armed clashes and violence, the complexity lay in the fact that women who joined the *Samooborona* were accepted by some fellow-protesters as well as the general public neither as women, because of their "unnatural" militarization, nor as "men", because of their gender. When analyzing the gender dynamics of the Arab Spring, Al-Ali argues that "a militarized masculinity [...] privileges authoritarianism, social hierarchies and tries to marginalize and control not only women but also non-normative men."[115] This observation is equally relevant to the gender politics of the Maidan. The relationship between masculinity, militarization, and violence was extremely powerful and those who participated in it, both women and men, often engaged in a certain "imitation of maleness".[116]

---

112 Interviewee Ovchar.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Al-Ali, "Gendering the Arab Spring": 26.
116 See Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

Those men who supported the causes of the Maidan but chose not to participate in the protests physically and, instead, to stay at home, performing other tasks, such as spreading information on social media sites or monitoring media coverage of the events, were relegated to what came to be known among the protesters as the "sofa unit" [*dyvanna sotnia*]. In her assessment of the representation of these "armchair warriors", Dar"ia Popova argues that the normative canon of masculinity and the nationalist discourse

> divided the roles between women and men, leaving the latter the choice of only two roles: heroes or cowards. If a man is not performing the required functions (such as fighting and being present on the Maidan), he is negated, and denied the chance of appearing *between* the roles of either the celebrated hero or a disrespected coward.[117]

Interestingly, while men who remained at home were compared to housewives and described as "men with female hormones,"[118] women themselves were not granted space even in this *sotnia*. Despite the *sotnia's* functioning in the traditionally feminine space—at home—only men were referred to as members of the "sofa unit". "This is not surprising," argues Popova, "as in Ukrainian society, the private sphere is reserved for a woman, and her passivity in the public sphere, especially in the political activity, is common and fits the idea of the norm."[119] The fact that a woman might choose to stay at home seems perfectly "natural" and not worthy of comment or criticism. Therefore, the protesters were defined according to their gender not only in the physical protest place, but also in the wider symbolic revolutionary space, and women were rejected as fully-fledged protesters in both.

Women's access to spaces was complex, characterized by restriction and acceptance of prescribed roles, direct opposition to

---

[117] Dar"ia Popova, "'Dyvanna sotnia': pryvilei, iaki ne vyishlo rozdilyty," *Ya* 3, no. 39 (2015): 14-5 (14). Emphasis is mine. For the debate on masculinity at the Maidan see Tamara Martsenyuk, "Hender i natsiia v ukrains'komu suspil'stvi: maskulinnosti ta Yevromaidan 2013-2014," *Ya 1,* no. 37 (2015): 4-9.

[118] Popova, "'Dyvanna sotnia'": 15.

[119] Ibid., 14.

such restrictions and by the creative rendering of the available gender roles. By creating sex-segregated formations, women found ways to fit into the larger patriarchal structures in control of the Maidan. Some did this by accepting the status quo and fulfilling "feminine" roles, others insisted on being allowed to contribute in the way they saw fit, even if this conflicted with the dominant perception of gender roles, others still chose to become "one of the boys" and participate on a par with the men by assuming a temporary "masculine" role. Here, Sara Mills' argument that women do not have separate spatial frameworks, but they "negotiate meanings within the context of dominant discursive fields,"[120] is highly relevant. Women on the Maidan carved spaces for themselves out of the existing, mostly male dominated space, both reinforcing and challenging it, and, inevitably, altering it with their presence.

Conclusions

The Maidan protests received an unprecedented amount of media attention. They put Ukraine back on the map internationally, and drew the attention of the population to the political situation nationally. Representations of the Maidan in the media and elsewhere, however, did not do justice to women's involvement in the protests: when "ordinary" women featured in news reports and documentary films they mostly appeared as the wives, mothers, or girlfriends of the male revolutionaries.[121] Even an exhibition of

---

[120] Mills, "Gender and Colonial Space": 142.

[121] For an example of the depiction of women in traditionally feminine roles see "Zhinochi oblychchia revoliutsii," aired on 1+1 channel in May 2014. The description of the film states that "[e]verything that a woman does, she does out of love. For her son, husband, Fatherland..." See http://www.1plus1.ua/video/zhinochi-oblichchya-revolyuciyi-na-1-1.html (accessed 24 October 2015). See also a documentary film titled "Zhinochi oblychchia Maidanu" by Olia Onyshko and Petro Didula, in particular, "Zhinky na vul. Hrushevs'koho. 21 sichnia 2014 roku," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LP1BAOiUMXs (accessed 24 October 2015). All episodes of the documentary can be accessed here: http://uamoderna.com/videoteka/women-faces-maydan. While the films try to depict a great variety of women who took part in the protests, the footage

photographs dedicated to the women of the Maidan, which was partly organized by the Ol'ha Kobylians'ka all-female unit, depicted largely those who performed traditionally feminine duties.[122] Often, images of women as protesters were held up as proof that the whole of Ukrainian society, *even women*, had joined the revolution. Women's presence on the Maidan and the association of females with peace rather than violence was vital for the creation of a specific image of the protests. Women were thus used instrumentally, but even this instrumentalization serves as evidence that the protests were not possible without women's contribution, regardless of what form this took.

Writing about the female fighters among the Sri Lankan "Tamil Tigers", Miranda Alison points out that active participation of women in political conflicts is often presented as "a necessary but temporary heroic sacrifice on the part of these 'exceptional' women, rather than as representing a fundamental shift in societal gender roles and relations".[123] Their participation, therefore, provides temporary "equality" with men but offers no guarantee for future emancipation. Likewise, in the Arab Spring women actively joined the anti-regime protests with their male counterparts, including those who resided in the most conservative areas of their respective countries, but participation in the revolutions did not signal their liberation. The relapse of Arab women's conditions in the aftermath of revolutions, as Muhamad S. Olimat argues, is due to the fact that "the freedom banner raised during the revolution shrunk in its aftermath to indicate freedom from tyranny, not total

---

does not challenge the widespread perception of women as helpers of the (male) revolutionaries. A documentary which did attempt to challenge such a portrayal was made by Marusya Bociurkiw. See "Women Stayed: The Untold Story of the Euromaidan," https://www.facebook.com/TheWomenStayedFilm/ (accessed 18 January 2016).

122 The exhibition was organized by the Fulbright Program in Ukraine, the International Charitable Fund "Ukrainian Women's Fund", and the Ol'ha Kobylians'ka all-female unit. See "Fotovystavka: 'Zhinky Maidanu'," 4 April 2014, http://www.fulbright.org.ua/uk/events/126/photo-exhibit.html (accessed 5 October 2015).

123 Miranda Alison, *Women and Political Violence: Female Combatants in Ethno-national Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2009), 111.

social freedom [...], giving voice to anti-women's groups to express their views on restricting women's rights, rather than expanding them."[124] Some women who were active in the protests, however, believe that the very occupation of the protest spaces by the women throughout the Arab world is bound to have an impact on women's rights in the region. An Egyptian political activist, Nawara Negm, argues that "[j]ust like there is no giving up on the call for freedom, democracy, and human rights in the Arab world, there is also no giving up when it comes to calling for women's rights, political representation, and equal participation in all walks of life".[125] She continues by arguing that in order to draw attention to gender equality, "women's rights have to be contextualized within the broader frame of human rights. In other words, Arab women will enjoy their full rights as citizens only when every Arab citizen, regardless of gender, is guaranteed these rights."[126]

Much of the rhetoric on the Maidan was about achieving respect for the rights of all citizens of Ukraine. Ukrainian politicians have repeated this intention in every election campaign since the end of the protests, yet they cannot be relied on to support the protection of the rights of women in post-Maidan Ukraine, as gender equality questions continue to be seen as untimely, especially when the country is engaged in a military conflict. Nevertheless, just as in the case of the Maidan, the Ukrainian state cannot ignore its female population entirely, and has to allow for some space for female political representation. A new law on local elections states that every political party is required to include no less than 30 percent of members of each gender.[127] This does not, of course, translate into immediate

---

124 Muhamad S. Olimat, *Arab Spring and Arab Women: Challenges and opportunities* (London: Routledge, 2014), 13.

125 In Khamis, "The Arab 'Feminist' Spring?": 693.

126 Ibid.

127 See Tamara Martsenyuk in "Exclusive Interview: Sociology Professor Explains Gender Quotas in Local Elections," *Ukraine Today*, 29 August 2015, http://uatoday.tv/society/tamara-martsenyuk-483852.html (accessed 5 October 2015), and Anastasiia Mel'nychenko, "Quota Morgana: iak v Ukraini ne spratsiuvaly henderni kvoty na vyborakh 2015," 5 October 2015, para. 17,

success for gender equality, since, as with many other laws in Ukraine, it will be easy to ignore or circumvent, and the "compulsory" women could be added to the party lists simply to tick the box rather than to truly change the composition of a given party in order to make it more open to women. Nevertheless, this law might facilitate a similar negotiation of gender relations as that which existed on the Maidan in another space dominated by men: the Parliament.[128] The fact that more women will be able to enter the political sphere might in itself serve to debunk the myth that the female space is the home, and that women can stand up solely for their sectional interests.

Another post-Maidan initiative that might help dispel some of the myths that were both reinforced and challenged on the Maidan is the reform of one of the most corrupt and highly patriarchal institutions in Ukraine: the police. Following a major post-Maidan recruitment wave, a quarter of the newly hired police in Kyiv consists of female officers.[129] The recruitment of such high numbers of women into the force has been recognized as part of an attempt to change the image of the police. Just as was the case with the *Samooborona*, the women here were used instrumentally to make the police seem less aggressive and thus more trustworthy. In spite of this predictable approach to the recruitment of "young and photogenic" female officers,[130] this penetration of a space traditionally occupied by men challenges the very idea of protection as an exclusively male task. If the initiative spreads across Ukraine and turns out to be equally popular among women outside of the capital, and if the general public starts to get used to the image of a female in police uniform, the very idea of the

---

http://povaha.org.ua/quota-morgana-yak-v-ukrajini-ne-spratsyuvaly-henderni-kvoty-na-vyborah-2015/ (accessed 5 October 2015).

128 See Tamara Martsenyuk, "Chy spratsiuvala henderna kvota na mistsevykh vyborakh 2015 roku?", *Mizhnarodnyi Tsentr Perspektyvnykh Doslidzhen'* (2015), http://www.icps.com.ua/assets/uploads/images/files/s_genders_b.pdf (accessed 24 February 2016).

129 "The Photogenic New Police Officers Patrolling Kiev's Streets," *BBC*, 9 July 2015, para. 3, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-33432788 (accessed 24 October 2015).

130 Ibid., para. 1.

enforced protection of women, discussed in this paper, could be challenged. [131]

The armed conflict in the eastern parts of Ukraine, which followed shortly after the Maidan protests, created new waves of militarization of Ukrainian society and renewed popularization of traditional masculinity, now equated with patriotism and loyalty to one's country. It is, thus, unsurprising that women became, once again, marginalized in this context. However, just as was the case with the Maidan, many women found ways to contribute to the fight for Ukraine's territorial integrity, in particular by working closely with the Armed Forces of Ukraine.[132] While they were officially allowed to join the army in non-combat roles only, women claim their place in the conflict in all possible capacities from volunteers who secure uniforms, food, and medical supplies to combat fighters. Since the start of the conflict in the Donbas region, more than one thousand women have taken part in it.[133] This poses an unresolved challenge both for the women and the Ukrainian state: on the one hand, their contribution is accepted and even welcomed, in particular, by their fellow-fighters, on the other, women who take part in combat remain legally

---

131 See Alina Kurlovych, "Zhinky u novii politsii: 'Nemaie chasu dumaty, khto cholovik, a khto zhinka, - chasto potribna myttieva reaktsiia, vzaiemorozuminnia ta dopomoha...," *Krona. Hendernyi Informatsiino-analitychnyi Tsentr* (2015), http://www.krona.org.ua/jinku-y-novij-polic.html?searched=поліція&advsearch=oneword&highlight=ajaxSearch_highlight+ajaxSearch_highlight1 (accessed 24 February 2016).

132 See Maria Berlins'ka, Tamara Martsenyuk, Anna Kvit, and Hanna Hrytsenko, "*Nevydymyi batal'ion": uchast' zhinok u viis'kovykh diiakh v ATO* (2015), http://www.ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/7746/Martsenyuk_Nevydymyi_bataloin.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y and http://www.prostir.ua/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/20160112114216466340Women_in_Military_Ukraine_Dec_8_2015.pdf (accessed 11 March 2016).

133 For the official data on the female members of the Ukrainian Armed Forces see Yulia Polikovs'ka, "Maizhe tysiacha ukrainok vzialy uchast' u provedenni ATO," *Zaxid.net*, 9 October 2015, http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?mayzhe_tisyacha_ukrayinok_vzyali_uchast_u_provedenni_ato&objectId=1368641 (accessed 14 October 2015), and Berlins'ka, Martsenyuk, Kvit, and Hrytsenko, "*Nevydymyi batal'ion".*

unrecognized.[134] Maria Berlins'ka, who following her participation in the Maidan became a volunteer in the army, is hopeful that the participation of women in the armed conflict in the East of Ukraine is likely to improve rather than aggravate the plight of Ukrainian women. According to Berlins'ka, women's voices in society are becoming louder as a result of their engagement in the conflict.[135]

Women, thus, continue to occupy spaces that are traditionally reserved for men, even in such gendered institutions as the military or the police, and this possibility emerged partly due to their participation in the protests on the Maidan. That is not to say, however, that participation of women in male-dominated institutions will definitely have a considerable impact on the rigid patriarchal nature of these institutions. What is evident is that, like the protests themselves, the legacy of the Maidan is multifaceted, and it is likely to continue provoking changes in Ukrainian society in the years to come. It is unclear, however, whether these changes will make the negotiation of public and political spaces for Ukrainian women less of an ordeal, and whether the effect they will have on perceptions of gender equality in Ukraine will be lasting.

---

134 For more information on this issue see Iryna Slavins'ka's interview with Maria Berlins'ka, "Nevydymyi batal'ion: zhinky na viini," *Hromadskeradio.org*, 29 August 2015, http://hromadskeradio.org/antena/nevydymyy-batalyon-zhinky-na-viyni (accessed 5 October 2015).

135 See interview with Maria Berlins'ka in this issue.